

Paying Her Dues

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Summary: Valka never pines for Berk, and aside from pity, the only thing she thinks of her son with is hatred, so sure is she that he'll be exactly the same as every other Viking Berk has ever churned out. That is, until she meets Hiccup himself and watches him shoot across her cave to hug his Night Fury's face.

Paying Her Dues

**I've seen it twice already and I'm not functioning and don't even ask me what I think because I'm working on figuring that out. **

I mean, I loved it. But it's a complicated and special love.

**And don't take Valka's position on Hiccup and his leg too seriously. I haven't pored over her enough to decide firmly on a response. **

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><p>She never pines for Berk. She misses Stoick like nothing she's ever felt (at least at first), but she is a Viking â€" somewhat â€" and stays strong and stubborn.<p>

In the long run â€" the short run, actually â€" her weakness would have gotten her son killed, guaranteed. She has to stay away.

Her love for Cloudjumper and her Bewilderbeast outweighs her former love for her little family.

She misses the feeling of her infant baby son at her breast, the way he would nestle in the spot between her chest and stomach, the sweet, baby smell of him. The pride in this creation of hers and Stoick's.

Cloudjumper eventually, after a few years, just manages to fill the

void. She never wishes she'd come back. She never rethinks her choices.

Sometimes she thinks of her son. Sometimes with remorse, wishing she could have raised him in her sanctuary, with sadness. Sometimes she wonders whether he took after her, slight and lean and bony, or massive like Stoick, muscled and gargantuan in size.

She leans toward the latter, because that is _just how things are._ She imagines him, red-haired and massive, a fearsome dragon-slayer, wielding a sword in one hand and a war hammer in another at twenty.

So she mostly thinks of her son with disgust. Pity, but knowing he's no better or different than the scores of Berkians in the six generations before his.

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Her dragons retrieve the fallen Night Fury for two reasons. One is because its rider is close to hysterics, yelling and kicking madly with that sharp metal foot at her dragon, and will be difficult to question if he keeps it up, and the other is that it's a Night Fury, and she can't stand any dragon hurting. None of them deserve to die.

She's never seen anyone else riding a dragon before, and she's intently curious and on guard. Surely Drago doesn't have his trappers _flying?_ It's inconceivable. It's impossible, it's literally impossible.

That mystery makes this man even more of a threat.

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The smell of the sword is something she recognizes immediately â€" it's Zippleback gas and ignites, and she wonders who came up with that, a way to show dragons you mean no immediate harm, presenting them with their own fire. It calms them down, wins them over, as he shows respect and they show respect back, and she's impressed and scared.

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Her world of the last twenty years â€" half of her life â€" is shattered in an instant.

Her son is not tall and wide, but thin and barely even taller than six feet. He's missing a leg, obviously a heroically wounded warrior. His armor is comprised of interlocking scales of leather. It looks partially based off chain mail, but more flexible andâ€"well, dragon-esque in design, reminding her of her own armor and mask.

But people don't change, and even though he's her _son_, she knows there has to be a reason. He's using the Night Fury, to sweep the dragons away from Berk once and for all, and then he'll drop it. He's spending time with it just to know best how to kill it. Excuses come to her in the dozens, because even though she wants to think the best of her son, it's impossible. He's a Viking, and Vikings and humans are selfish and stupid, and she doesn't want to be one of them. He

can't be like her.

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But he's not faking the relief and love as the Night Fury is dropped, shivering and dripping and terrified, as he practically flies across the cave to it, grabbing its face and hugging tight, stroking and squeezing, words of comfort and reassurance coming out so quickly â€" not only to calm the Night Fury, but to convey his own feelings. Valka knows, from the hurriedly spoken, "_It's okay, I'm here"_s, that the fear was real.

The replaced tailfin is the final straw. What enemy would invent that, spend the time to perfect it, and bind himself to a creature that will need him forever? She could fit it into her excuse if she had to â€" how much easier would it be to force a dragon to do your will if you hurt it first, rip it from the sky and chain it to the ground forever? â€" but she can't forget the way his voice broke as he held the dragon's face.

All of the things she's come to believe have been stripped from her. Suddenly she feels twenty again â€" Hiccup's age â€", kidnapped the same way Hiccup was, in dragon talons, yelling and protesting, and dropped in this selfsame cave.

But she'd dropped to her knees and sobbed, and Hiccup had landed on his feet.

They face each other as adults, as equals, something neither of them ever thought would happen.

Valka has a sudden, strange desire. She wants to try it again, life as a human. She wants to start the past twenty years over. She can't.

But she has hope now, a hope in humanity she'd never wanted or expected, and it's unbelievable to her. He might be like her. He might have had the opportunity to be like her from the beginning. They might be friends â€" they might even be family again.

Those twenty years are over now, and she doesn't know if she regrets them or not, but she has to make do with the twenty-year-old Hiccup she's got.

She owes it to her son.

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